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INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 22871

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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REF: SAIGON 22363

SUBJECT: TWO ADDITIONAL CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENCY

1. FORMER PRIME MINISTER TRAN VAN HUONG AND REVOLUTIONARY PARTY LEADER HA THUC KY HAVE PUBLICLY DECLARED THEIR INTENTION TO RUN FOR PRESIDENTY.

2. HUONG STATEMENT ANNOUNCING CANDIDACY (TEXT REPORTED REFTEL) FIRST APPEARED IN APRIL 8 EDITION THOI DAI. ONLY OTHER NEWSPAPER TO PICK UP STATEMENT THUS FAR HAS BEEN SOUTHERN ORIENTED TAI SANG. STATEMENT GIVES NO INDICATION WHOM HUONG PLANS TO SELECT AS RUNNING MATE.

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3. STORY ANNOUNCING HA TUC KY'S CANDIDACY FIRST CARRIED IN APRIL 12 EDITION SAIGON DAILY NEWS, AND WIDELY REPORTED IN VERNACULAR PRESS SAME AFTERNOON. KY QUOTED AS SAYING CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF HIS PARTY DESIGNATED HIM TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT AND EMPHASIZED PREPARATIONS BEGAN THREE MONTHS AGO. THE PARTY HAS NOT YET DESIGNATED A RUNNING-MATE ALTHOUGH KY INDICATED THAT HE WOULD BE A SOUTHERNER. HE LABELLED UNTRUE RUMORS THAT HE MIGHT EVENTUALY OPT FOR SECOND POSITION ON SOMEONE ELSE'S SLATE.

(1)

4. KY HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN SAYING PRIVATELY THAT HE PLANNED TO RUN FOR PRESIDENCY. ON MARCH 30 HE TOLD POLTICAL COUNSELOR HE WAS NOT IN LEAST INCLINED TO WITHDRAW FROM RACE EVEN IF IT WOULD ENHANCE ELECTION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 10/5/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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CHANCES OF ANOTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATE. AT THAT TIME HE ALSO INDICATED THAT HE WAS SEARCHING FOR A SOUTHERNER AS HIS VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD APPROACHED SOUTHERN BUDDHIST

STUDIES ASSOCIATION LEADER MAI THO TRUYEN BUT TRUYEN DECLINED. IN EARLIER CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, KY SAID HE HAD ALSO SOUNDED OUT FORMER ECONOMY MINISTER AU TRUONG THANH BUT THANH NOT VERY INTERESTED.

5. KY IS OUTWARDLY CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS PROSPECTS AND PROSESSES TO BELIEVE THAT PRIME MINISTER KY OR CHIEF OF STATE THIEU WILL FIND IN ELECTIONS THAT GOVERNMENT IS REALLY QUITE UNPOPULAR.

6. KY'S TRUE INTENTIONS WITH RESPECT TO PRESIDENTIAL RACE ARE NOT YET ENTIRELY CLEAR. HE HAS SOME POPULAR SUPPORT IN CENTRAL VIET-NAM, PARTICULARLY QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN PROVINCES; BUT IN OUR JUDGEMENT HE DOES NOT HAVE STATURE OR NATIONAL PRESTIGE TO MAKE SERIOUS BID FOR PRESIDENCY. NOTWITHSTANDING KY'S OWN DENIALS, HE MAY WELL HOLD OUT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AS FAVORATE SON OF REVOLUTIONARY DAI VIETS AND THEN TEAM UP AS NUMBER TWO MAN ON SOMEONE ELSE'S SLATE. LODGE BT

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